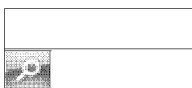


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Charter Review Commission to conduct public hearing in Preston

from King County Councilmember Kathy Lambert

King County Councilmember Kathy Lambert invites organizations, agencies and residents of Council District 3 to participate in the charter review process at public hearing Thursday, June 21, at 6:30 p.m. at the Preston Community Center, 8625 310th Ave. SE, Preston.

As part of King County's once-a-decade review of the County Charter, the 21-member Charter Review Commission is undertaking a public outreach effort to get agencies, organizations and citizens involved in recommending modifications to the Charter. In June and July, the commission will conduct nine public hearings around the county, one in each of the nine King County Council districts.

Commission member John Jensen of the Newcastle Chamber of Commerce will chair the hearing in Preston. Councilmember Lambert will present a list of her priorities for charter amendments that will allow more County Council oversight of the budget process and more responsible asset-management policies, and charter review staff will provide an overview of the process. The commission will use public comments to formulate recommendations for amending the charter, which will go to the council next spring. The council will decide on placing amendments on the November 2008 General Election ballot.

Several organizations already have made formal presentations to the Charter Review Commission, including the League of Women Voters, the Municipal League, the Suburban Cities Association and the Unincorporated Areas Councils.

Comments can be submitted in person at the public hearing, or go to <http://www.metrokc.gov/exec/charter/default.aspx> for more information about the other hearings and to submit comments in writing.

The King County Charter is available online at <http://www.metrokc.gov/mkcc/code/03-Charter.pdf>.

News

If you have some Local News that you would like to share with the community, please submit your short story, article, announcement or review here.

Charter Review Top Priority Issues

The following proposals come from King County Councilwoman Kathy Lambert and represent only a few of the proposals she will be presenting to the Charter Review Commission.

Budget

Issue: The current budget transmittal timeline of 75 days before the end of the fiscal year does not give the Council enough time to review the budget before approval with a cushion to address any veto. (Section 410)

Proposal: Increase number of days for the Executive to present the budget before Council approval. Also, budget requests from all agencies should go to the Council at the same time as they go to the Executive to provide enough time and data for the Council to review agency needs.

Issue: Quarterly budget updates that allow regular corrections are not transmitted by the Executive to the Council in a timely manner, or not at all, because they are not required in the Charter. (Section 470)

Proposal: Require quarterly budget updates to be submitted within 20 days of the end of each quarter, and provide an enforcement mechanism.

Personnel

Issue: The authority for removal of an employee is assigned solely to the Executive, and the Council has no ability to remove a problem employee. (Section 340.60)

Proposal: Consider adding a super majority vote of the Council for removal of an employee, and better define "malfeasance" and the process for addressing it.

Issue: Public versus private employment equity. (Section 540)

Proposal: In forming salary decisions, require comparison to private sector in equal proportion to government sector. Currently, comparisons are allowed only to other public sector jobs.

Issue: Separately elected officials such as the sheriff do not have control over labor negotiations. (Section 510)

Proposal: Give separately elected officials authority over labor negotiations and labor contracts in their departments, and allow them the authority to negotiate within dollar limit and outlying year cost parameters established with the Executive.

Issue: Council District offices are staffed and funded equally although the responsibilities for local government functions vary according to how much of each district is unincorporated. Some districts are very large and transportation costs are much greater than smaller districts. In addition, some districts have long distance calls to their citizens while others do not. (220.30)

Proposal: Provide for proportional staffing and funding to Council District offices that represent local government functions for unincorporated areas.

Executive

Issue: Lack of access to information needed for policy discussions and legislation caused by the ban on the Council

"interfering" with the administration. (220.50)

Proposal: Redefine "interference" so that it will allow the Council access to information from Executive and Budget staff, including "read-only" access to all budget accounts and side programs.

Other Issues

Issue: King County Library System Board of Commissioners is unresponsive to its employees and the public regarding management and financial issues. The commissioners are appointed by the Executive and confirmed by the Council. (Not in current charter)

Proposal: Incorporate KCLS into King County as a separate department, with the Board of Commissioners serving as an advisory board, and with budget oversight by the Council, similar to City of Seattle library structure.

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